

CHAPTER III:  
**POPULATION**

## *Chapter III:* **POPULATION**

### **Population Characteristics**

Fully understanding the existing demographic, economic and sociopolitical characteristics of Smithfield and the surrounding region is a key component in developing a land use plan that will realistically guide future growth. With this goal in mind, this chapter includes the most recent population estimates, population growth trends, demographic characteristics and household information. Whenever possible, this chapter incorporates the most recent population estimates provided by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. However, the most in-depth and up-to-date information describing the demographic, social and economic conditions found in Smithfield and the surrounding region is still found in the 1990 Census. Although the 1990 Census data are now outdated, they best reflect the unique characteristics of the people who live within the Town of Smithfield and the surrounding region.

### **Population Growth**

A regional growth perspective is vital to understanding existing development pressures confronting the Town of Smithfield. Smithfield is one jurisdiction within the Hampton Roads area of the Commonwealth. The Town is located in the northern portion of Isle of Wight County. Both Isle of Wight and Smithfield are located in the Hampton Roads Planning District (HRPD), an expansive planning district incorporating four counties and ten independent cities. The population of the HRPD in 1990 was 1,416,443.

The three urban jurisdictions nearest to the Town of Smithfield are the City of Suffolk, the City of Newport News and the City of Hampton. Together, these jurisdictions combine with Isle of Wight County to define Smithfield's regional context. For the purposes of this section of the Comprehensive Plan, these jurisdictions will be analyzed jointly as a means of providing a regional comparison of emerging demographic trends.

While the entire region has experienced strong population growth over the past three decades, these localities have been growing at a decreasing rate since 1970 as illustrated in Table III-1 on the following page. As is reflected in this table, Smithfield reached an estimated population of 5,315 by 1996, and the overall region of influence had grown to approximately 401,000 people. The Weldon Cooper Center provides an annual population estimate for towns, counties and cities throughout the State, and as of the printing of this Plan, the 1996 estimate was the most current state generated population figure provided for the Town. According to the 2000 Census, Smithfield has a population of 6,324 persons.

Table III-1

**Smithfield and the Region  
Comparative Population Growth  
1970 - 1996**

	1970	1980	1990	1996
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Smithfield</b>	<b>2,713</b>	<b>3,718</b>	<b>4,686</b>	<b>5,315</b>
Isle of Wight	18,285	21,603	25,053	28,200
Newport News	138,177	144,903	170,045	177,500
Hampton	120,779	122,617	133,793	137,700
Suffolk	45,024	45,621	52,141	57,600
Region	322,265	334,744	381,032	401,000

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Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The Town of Smithfield has grown at rates more than double that of the regional average since 1970. For example, from 1970 to 1980, Smithfield's population increased at a compound annual growth rate of 3.2 percent as compared to the region's overall growth rate of only 0.4 percent, as is reflected in Table III-2 on the following page. More recently, Smithfield's growth has slowed, yet still continues to grow much faster than the overall region. From 1980 to 1990, Smithfield's population increased by 2.3 percent annually, a full percent above the regional rate of 1.3 percent. This emerging pattern of population growth has continued into the most recent period of comparison, from 1990 to 1996, when the region experienced a decrease in its annual rate of growth (from 1.3 to 0.8 percent), and the Town declined from 2.3 percent annual growth in 1990 to 2.1 percent in 1996 (see Table III-3 on the following page). Regional population trends over the past two decades reveal a slow, steady increase in population, with Smithfield and Isle of Wight growing at rates much faster than the region as a whole.

Table III-2

**Smithfield and the Region  
Comparative Population Growth: 1970-1996  
Compound Annual Growth**

	1970 Pop.	1980 Pop.	1970-1980 Compound Annual Growth	1990 Pop.	1980-1990 Compound Annual Growth	1996 Pop.	1990-1996 Compound Annual Growth
<b>Smithfield</b>	<b>2,713</b>	<b>3,718</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>4,686</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>5,315</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Isle of Wight	18,285	21,603	1.7%	25,053	1.5%	28,200	2.0%
Newport News	138,177	144,903	0.5%	170,045	1.6%	177,500	0.7%
Hampton	120,779	122,617	0.2%	133,793	0.9%	137,700	0.5%
Suffolk	45,024	45,621	0.1%	52,141	1.3%	57,600	1.7%
Region	322,265	334,744	0.4%	381,032	1.3%	401,000	0.9%

Source: Bureau of the Census, Cooper Center for Public Service

Table III-3

**Smithfield and the Region  
Population Estimates: 1990-1996**

Jurisdiction	1990 Population	1990 Population: % of Region	1990-1996 Growth Increment	1990-1996 Growth: % of Region	1996 Population	1996 Population: % of Region	Compound Annual Growth Rate
<b>Smithfield</b>							
exclusive of annexation	4,686	1.2%	629	3.2%	5,315	1.3%	2.1%
inclusive of annexation							
Isle of Wight							
exclusive of annexation	25,053	6.6%	3,147	15.8%	28,200	7.0%	2.0%
inclusive of annexation							
Newport News	170,045	44.6%	7,455	37.3%	177,500	44.3%	0.6%
Hampton	133,793	35.1%	3,907	19.6%	137,700	34.3%	0.5%
Suffolk	52,141	13.7%	5,459	27.3%	57,600	14.4%	1.7%
Region	381,032	100.0%	19,968	100.0%	401,000	100%	0.8%

The high rate of growth experienced in Smithfield relative to its neighbors may best be explained by its relative attractiveness to newcomers based upon its unique small town charm, its high quality of life, its access to steady employment opportunities and its wide variety of affordable housing opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, residents of Smithfield enjoy the qualities of small town living while being in close proximity to a major metropolitan area. They also enjoy a unique and walkable Downtown area which boasts a charming historic district and several points of waterfront access. Furthermore, the meat packing industry has been a source of steady employment for generations in Smithfield, while neighboring localities have been subject to the less reliable military based economy in the Hampton Roads area. Finally, the Town has a diverse housing stock that provides opportunities for people of all income levels. The Town's recent annexation will also eventually boost the Town's available housing opportunities even further as the annexation areas contain several hundred acres of developable land that most certainly will be used for residential construction. All of these factors have combined to allow Smithfield to experience population increases at almost double the regional rate for the last twenty years.

### Age

As can be seen in Table III-4 below and in Figures III-1 and III-2 on the following page, the regional population is normally distributed among all age groups. The highest concentrations are found among young adults between the ages of 25 and 34. Children represent another significant portion of the population. Sixteen percent of the regional population are under the age of fourteen. Unfortunately, the age distribution breakdown is unavailable for the Town, however, statistics are maintained for the County of Isle of Wight. Isle of Wight's population distribution by age closely mirrors that of the region with the highest concentrations being among young adults (17.9%) and children (28.7%).

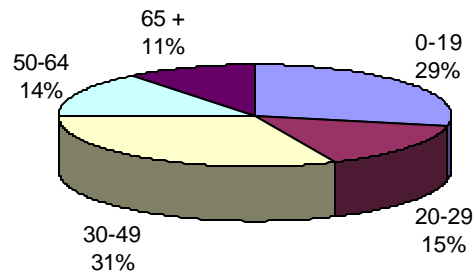
Table III-4

#### Smithfield's Region of Influence Population by Age Groups

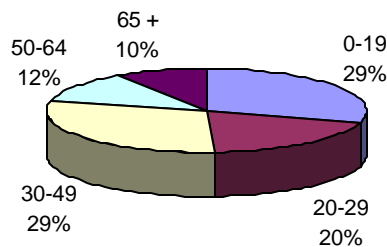
Age Group	Isle of Wight	Percent of Total	Newport News	Percent of Total	Suffolk	Percent of Total	Hampton	Percent of Total	Region	Percent of Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,367</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>170,045</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>12,805</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>133,793</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>337,010</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Under 5	1,542	7.6%	15,887	9.3%	825	6.4%	10,499	7.8%	28,753	8.5%
5-9	1,499	7.4%	13,398	7.9%	899	7.0%	9,619	7.2%	25,415	7.5%
10-14	1,416	7.0%	11,063	6.5%	957	7.5%	8,405	6.3%	21,841	6.5%
15-19	1,357	6.7%	11,382	6.7%	909	7.1%	10,040	7.5%	23,688	7.0%
20-24	1,268	6.2%	15,796	9.3%	701	5.5%	12,813	9.6%	30,578	9.1%
25-29	1,744	8.6%	19,587	11.5%	911	7.1%	13,530	10.1%	35,772	10.6%
30-34	1,904	9.3%	17,096	10.1%	1,127	8.8%	12,756	9.5%	32,883	9.8%
35-39	1,718	8.4%	12,953	7.6%	1,104	8.6%	10,438	7.8%	26,213	7.8%
40-44	1,483	7.3%	10,642	6.3%	990	7.7%	8,854	6.6%	21,969	6.5%
45-49	1,347	6.6%	8,135	4.8%	906	7.1%	7,090	5.3%	17,478	5.2%
50-54	1,080	5.3%	6,439	3.8%	687	5.4%	6,264	4.7%	14,470	4.3%
55-59	942	4.6%	6,047	3.6%	626	4.9%	5,735	4.3%	13,350	4.0%
60-64	913	4.5%	5,816	3.4%	645	5.0%	4,949	3.7%	12,323	3.7%
65-69	782	3.8%	5,713	3.4%	514	4.0%	4,950	3.7%	11,959	3.5%
70-74	592	2.9%	4,296	2.5%	418	3.3%	3,456	2.6%	8,762	2.6%
75 and over	780	3.8%	5,795	3.4%	586	4.6%	4,395	3.3%	11,556	3.4%

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Figure III-1**  
**Population by Age**  
**Isle of Wight County**  
 Source: 1990 Census



**Figure III-2**  
**Population by Age**  
**Smithfield's Region of Influence**  
 Source: 1990 Census



School-age children comprise a significant portion of the population in Isle of Wight County. Children between the ages of five and nineteen accounted for twenty-one percent (21.1%) of the population in 1990. Throughout the region, school age children similarly comprised 21.0% of the total population, falling slightly under the Statewide average of 24.3%. These figures suggest that both Isle of Wight and the region as a whole similarly host a competitive supply of affordably priced homes and safe, secure neighborhoods attractive to couples with young children.

The smallest segment of the population in Isle of Wight County and the overall region is comprised of those aged sixty-five and older. In Isle of Wight County, only 10.5% of the population falls into this age category. This is consistent with the overall region in which senior citizens comprise 9.5% of the total population. However, this region contrasts sharply to the nearby City of Williamsburg where older residents comprise a significant portion (20%) of its population. Older residents seek housing opportunities in localities which provide amenities they desire. The lack of these types of housing units in both Isle of Wight County and Smithfield are likely to contribute to the small proportion of senior citizens living in the area.

The age distribution of the population of Isle of Wight County strongly correlates to levels and types of services demanded by residents. The current figures suggest that presently, there is a large percentage of school-aged children who require public education. It can be assumed that this figure will remain strong in the coming years as young couples within the region continue to find affordable living opportunities in the Town and surrounding county.

Seniors are another age group whose needs require increased levels of government services. The current age distribution of the population in Isle of Wight County identifies twenty-one percent of the population as falling between the ages of 45 and 64. Over the next twenty years, these people will be entering the retirement phase of their lives. The implications for the Town of Smithfield are substantial as older citizens demand services, particularly those related to health care. If the Town of Smithfield intends to have its citizens remain in town during their retirement years, consideration must be given to providing the suitable living opportunities, services and amenities aging citizens require.

**Sex**

Based on 1996 estimates, females comprised 53.1% of Smithfield's population. This female "predominance" is consistent with the prevailing national demographic trend. The future aging of the baby boom generation is expected to magnify this trend. Currently, the region and the State are about equally divided between genders, but State demographers project that this trend will establish a slight female majority for those larger geographic areas as well.

**Households**

A household, according to the U.S. Census definition, includes all persons who occupy any given housing unit. A housing unit is a single room or a group of rooms occupied as a separate living quarters. Within a housing unit, there must be either direct access from outside the building or from a common hall and complete kitchen facilities must be available for the exclusive use of the members of the household. A single family detached home, a townhouse unit, an apartment and a condominium are all considered single housing units. From the Census Bureau's perspective, all persons whom are not members of households must live in either group quarters, such as dormitories, barracks and rooming houses or institutions, including hospitals, asylums and jails. As seen in Table III-5 on the following page, in each of the four jurisdictions comprising the region of influence, non-household residents represent a relatively small proportion of the total population. In Isle of Wight County, non-household populations are not a significant area of concern.

Table III-5

**Smithfield's Region of Influence  
Household Type**

	Isle of Wight	Newport News	Hampton	Suffolk	Region
Total Persons	25,053	170,045	133,793	52,141	381,032
In Households	24,835	165,455	128,156	51,477	369,923
Inmates of Institutions	217	1,593	1,510	612	3,932
Other, Group Quarters	1	2,997	4,127	52	7,177

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

**Household Size**

Household size is the average number of persons living in a given housing unit. This size is critical in projecting future housing demand. The average household size in a community is determined by dividing the household population by the number of households. As shown in Table III-6 below, the average household size for the Smithfield region ranged between 2.58 and 2.78 according to the 1990 Census. Smithfield's estimated average household size of 2.66 is slightly higher than the State average of 2.61.

Table III-6

**Smithfield's Region of Influence  
Number of Persons Living in Housing Units**

	Isle of Wight Co.	Percent of Total	Newport News	Percent of Total	Hampton	Percent of Total	Suffolk	Percent of Total	Region	Percent of Total
1 Person	1,658	18.3%	15,183	23.7%	11,764	23.7%	3,778	20.4%	32,384	20.4%
2 Persons	2,975	32.9%	20,304	31.7%	15,874	32.0%	5,692	30.7%	44,846	30.7%
3 Persons	1,825	20.2%	12,644	19.8%	9,962	20.1%	3,770	20.4%	28,202	20.4%
4 Persons	1,614	17.9%	10,145	15.9%	7,779	15.7%	3,027	16.3%	22,566	16.3%
5 Persons	688	7.6%	3,866	6.0%	2,910	5.9%	1,325	7.2%	8,789	7.2%
6 Persons	133	1.5%	1,197	1.9%	905	1.8%	506	2.7%	2,741	2.7%
7 Persons	148	1.6%	613	1.0%	479	1.0%	418	2.3%	1,658	2.3%
<b>Total Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>9,041</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>63,952</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>49,673</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>18,516</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>141,186</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Average Household Size**

1990	2.75	2.59	2.58	2.78
1980	3.04	2.73	2.83	3.00
1970	3.59	3.24	3.34	3.40

Source: 1990 U.S. Census



The regional trend of decreasing household size over the last twenty years as depicted in Table III-6 is consistent with national demographic trends. The trend is expected to continue in the future as families continue to have fewer children and single parent households become increasingly more common. Moreover, it is likely that both Smithfield and Isle of Wight County will experience an increase in the total number of households as the population continues to grow and smaller households with different needs are formed and enter the market such as transient singles, retirees selling larger homes and married couples without children.

### Household Composition

In addition to household size, the mix of household types influences the kind of housing that will be demanded within a community. The 1990 U.S. Census classifies households as families and non-families. A "family" is defined as a household where two or more related individuals live together.

The composition of households within the Smithfield region is depicted below in Table III-7. The table presents the number of "family" households and those of other relationships. Within Isle of Wight County, 21% of all households are classified as non-family. In comparison, the jurisdictions of the surrounding region of influence have slightly higher percentages of non-family households with Hampton's 29% being the highest. These figures are well below the State's percentage of non-family households (39%). In Isle of Wight and throughout the region, household composition predominately takes the form of traditional, nuclear families with children.

Table III-7

### Smithfield's Region of Influence Relationship of Persons to Householder

Relationship to Householder	Isle of Wight	Newport News	Hampton	Suffolk	Region
Householder	9,010	63,278	49,563	18,397	140,248
Family	7,087	45,250	35,186	14,186	101,709
Nonfamily	1,923	18,028	14,377	4,211	38,539
Spouse	5,685	33,517	26,860	10,344	76,406
Children	7,945	53,654	40,057	16,925	118,581
Other Relatives	1,570	7,135	5,965	4,080	18,750
Nonrelatives	503	7,197	5,551	1,612	14,863
<b>Total in Households</b>	<b>24,835</b>	<b>165,455</b>	<b>128,156</b>	<b>51,477</b>	<b>369,923</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

### Household Income

Household income is the total income of all wage earners who live within a household. In most cases, this income level controls the level of retail spending patterns as well as the type and quality of housing a household can afford. Two measures of household income are provided in this analysis: median income and percentage of households by income range. Both measures reveal that the residents of Smithfield have buying power at competitive levels with the residents of neighboring jurisdictions. However, as described in Table III-8 below, Isle of Wight's median household income level (\$29,168) trails the state-wide level (\$33,328) by a significant amount.

Table III-8

#### Smithfield's Region of Influence Income Levels of Households in 1989

	Isle of Wight	Percent of Total	Newport News	Percent of Total	Hampton	Percent of Total	Suffolk	Percent of Total	Region	Percent of Total
Less than \$5,000	557	6.2%	5,438	8.5%	3,161	6.4%	1,578	8.5%	10,734	7.6%
\$5,000-\$9,999	860	9.5%	4,954	7.7%	3,425	6.9%	2,125	11.4%	11,364	8.0%
\$10,000-\$14,999	633	7.0%	5,370	8.4%	3,651	7.3%	1,793	9.6%	11,447	8.1%
\$15,000-\$24,999	1,723	19.1%	13,022	20.4%	9,394	18.9%	3,537	19.0%	27,677	19.6%
\$25,000-\$34,999	1,606	17.8%	11,452	17.9%	9,502	19.1%	2,667	14.3%	25,228	17.8%
\$35,000-\$49,999	1,808	20.0%	12,053	18.9%	10,077	20.3%	3,266	17.5%	27,205	19.2%
\$50,000 or more	1,854	20.5%	11,651	18.2%	10,489	21.1%	3,685	19.8%	27,680	19.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,041</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>63,940</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>49,699</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>18,651</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>141,335</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median	29,168	-	27,469	-	30,144	-	26,125	-	-	-
Mean	33,702	-	33,106	-	34,476	-	32,990	-	-	-
<b>Virginia Median</b>	<b>33,328</b>									

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Recent estimates indicate that income levels are rising in the region. As can be seen in Table III-9 on the following page, when 1989 income levels are adjusted for inflation to 1996 dollars, a moderate increase in household income is noted. The estimated household income for Smithfield in 1996 is \$41,249. The Weldon Cooper Center estimates that the median household incomes for Isle of Wight County and the cities of Newport News, Hampton and Suffolk are slightly lower than that of Smithfield. When compared to the 1989 income levels represented in Table III-9, the average household income level in Smithfield, Isle of Wight and Suffolk have experienced strong growth, while Hampton's income level has remained steady and Newport News's average household income declined by 2.6%.

Table III-9

**Smithfield's Region of Influence  
Household Income Changes: 1989-1996**

	1989 Household Income	Adjustment For Inflation	1989 Adjusted H.H. Income ('96 \$)	1996 Household Income	Percent Change
<b>Smithfield</b>	<b>\$30,581</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>\$38,838</b>	<b>\$41,249</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
Isle of Wight County	\$29,168	1.27	\$37,043	\$38,988	5.2%
Newport News	\$27,469	1.27	\$34,886	\$33,985	-2.6%
Hampton	\$30,144	1.27	\$38,283	\$38,268	0.0%
Suffolk	\$26,125	1.27	\$33,179	\$34,260	3.3%

1989 CPI Value=124.0

1996 CPI Value=156.9

Source: 1990 Census; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy; Equifax Data Systems

**SUMMARY**

The analysis of the current demographic character of Smithfield and its neighboring jurisdictions provides a sound basis for making future planning decisions. Some of the most important characteristics that have been considered during the development of the future land use plan are:

- The comparatively high rate of population growth in Smithfield relative to the rest of the region;
- The high proportion of school age children and relatively low proportion of elder citizens (65+) currently residing in the area; and
- The significant portion of the population projected to reach retirement age over the next twenty years.